

STAFF REPORT

To: Mayor and City Council Date: August 10, 2010
From: Cathy Ball, Director of Public Works
Via: Gary W. Jackson, City Manager
Subject: Waste Stream Reduction Pilot Program

Summary Statement: The consideration of a motion approving a Waste Stream Reduction Pilot Program intended to test the feasibility of a variable-rate waste program model in Asheville.

Review: In January 2010, City Council developed a strategic plan that included a goal to continue to make Asheville the southeastern leader in clean energy and environmental sustainability. A specific action item under this goal states that staff should look for ways to take the city's sustainability program to the next level, specifically by seeking ways to reduce city-wide solid waste.

As part of the City of Asheville's Sustainability Management plan, special attention was focused on solid waste. The plan recommended that Asheville increase its role as a state leader in sanitation and recycling with an emphasis on expanding recycling by developing a market-based incentive program.

Variable-rate waste programs provide citizens with an economic incentive to reduce the waste they throw away because garbage bills increase as the volume of waste increases. Variable-rate pricing is being adopted in thousands of communities to create incentives for increased recycling in the residential sector.

Although above average when compared to other cities in the state, recycling over the last several years has been essentially flat in the City of Asheville. In order to be progressive stewards of our recycling service and increase waste diversion, staff has been investigating a variable-rate waste program that would include the benefit of single-stream recycling.

Analysis: The attached Waste Stream Reduction report outlines a variable-rate waste program model as well as a proposed pilot study (page 5) that will assess the viability of implementing such a program within the City of Asheville. The pilot program will involve 572 homes in three neighborhoods and will incorporate a detailed communication and outreach component. Analysis during the pilot study will provide additional details of the financial impact both to residents and the city which will in turn form baseline data for options to move toward a full or partial cost recovery model.

Pros:

- Reduction of land filled solid waste
- Increased awareness of recycled material for residents in pilot area
- Supports Council's sustainability goals

Con:

- Cost per month per household may increase if the single stream program is implemented citywide.

This complies with City Council's Strategic Operating Plan in that Asheville will be the southeastern leader in clean energy and environmental sustainability by expanding community education programs and implementing ways to reduce city-wide solid waste.

Fiscal Impact: Costs for the pilot program is \$5,000, which will be funded through already budgeted funds in the Public Works Department.

Recommendation: City staff recommends City Council approve a Waste Stream Reduction Pilot Program. Results of the pilot program and recommendations for considering program expansion would be brought forward for City Council consideration in late 2010 or early 2011.

Attachment:
(1) Waste Stream Reduction Report